

FABLES™

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JJ04

issue 34 Apr. 05

BILL WILLINGHAM

DAVID HAHN

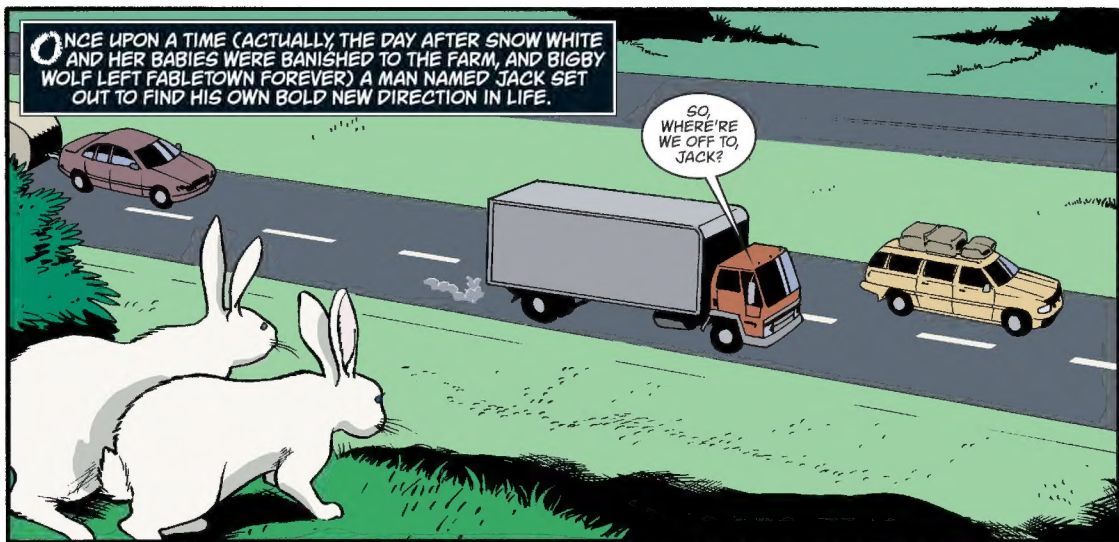
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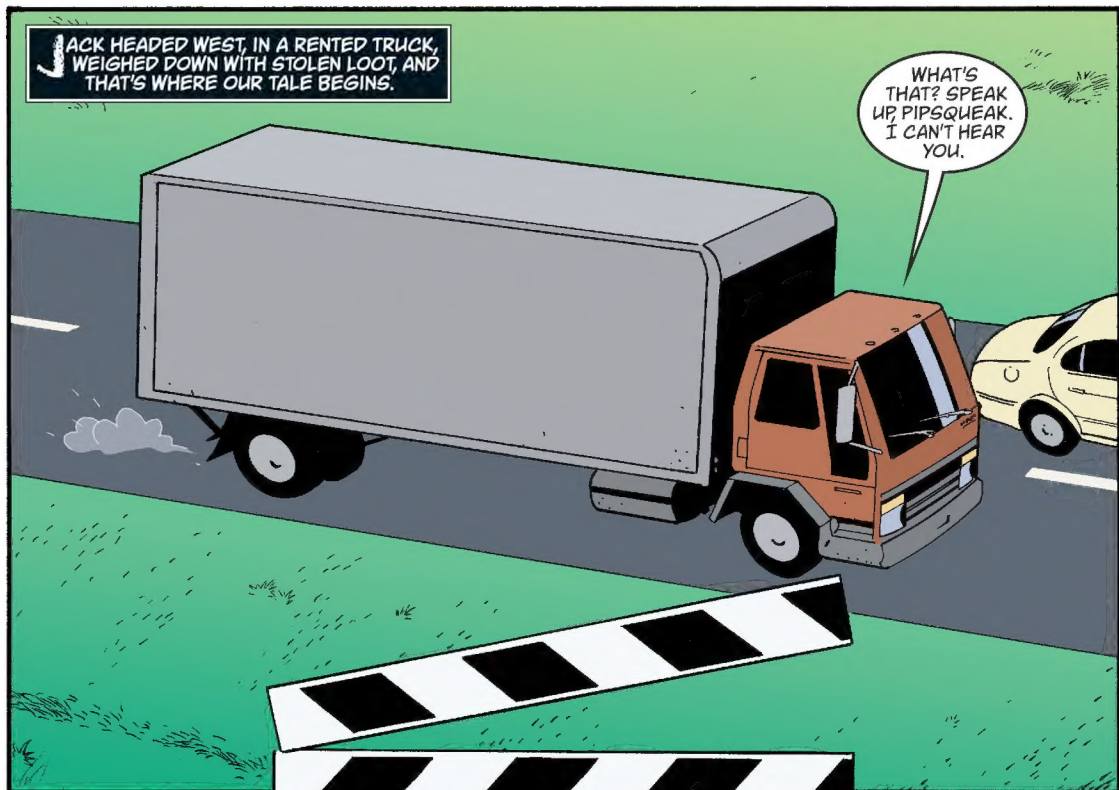
NEW STORYLINE

ERICH VON ROHEIM

ONCE UPON A TIME (ACTUALLY, THE DAY AFTER SNOW WHITE AND HER BABIES WERE BANISHED TO THE FARM, AND BIGBY WOLF LEFT FABLETOWN FOREVER) A MAN NAMED JACK SET OUT TO FIND HIS OWN BOLD NEW DIRECTION IN LIFE.



JACK HEADED WEST, IN A RENTED TRUCK, WEIGHED DOWN WITH STOLEN LOOT, AND THAT'S WHERE OUR TALE BEGINS.



BILL WILLINGHAM, WRITER/CREATOR PRESENTS

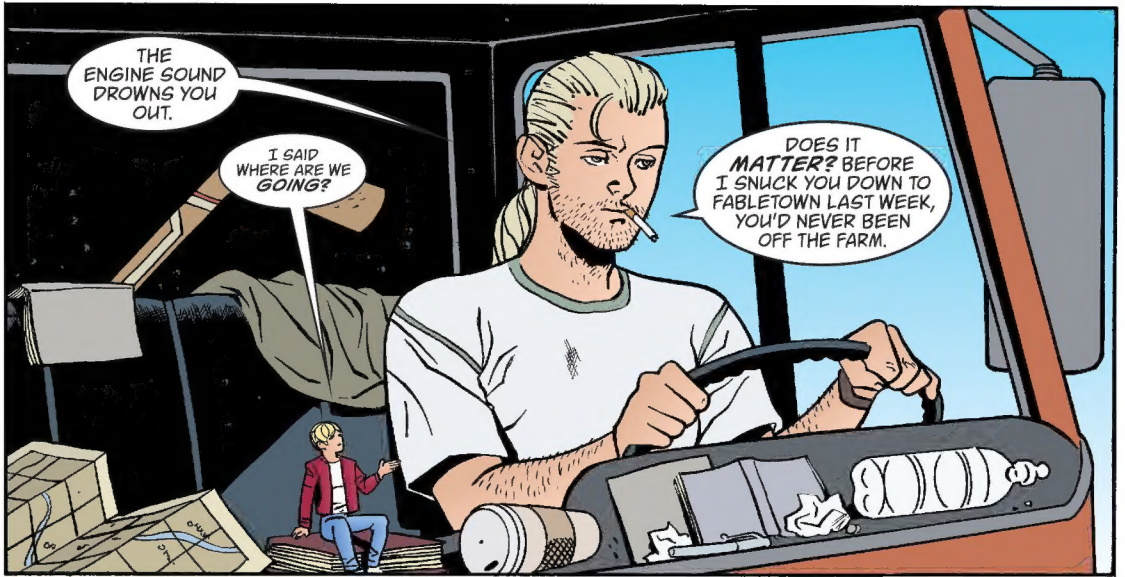
JACK BE NIMBLE	PART ONE OF TWO	CHAPTER ONE: JACK AND JILL
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DAVID HAHN, PENCILS AND INKS

KLEIN, LETTERS · VOZZO, COLORS · JEAN, COVER

ANARIAH HUEHNER, ASST. ED · SHELLY BOND, EDITOR

CONVERSION BY
WILDSTORM



THE ENGINE SOUND DROWNS YOU OUT.

I SAID WHERE ARE WE GOING?

DOES IT MATTER? BEFORE I SNUCK YOU DOWN TO FABLETOWN LAST WEEK, YOU'D NEVER BEEN OFF THE FARM.

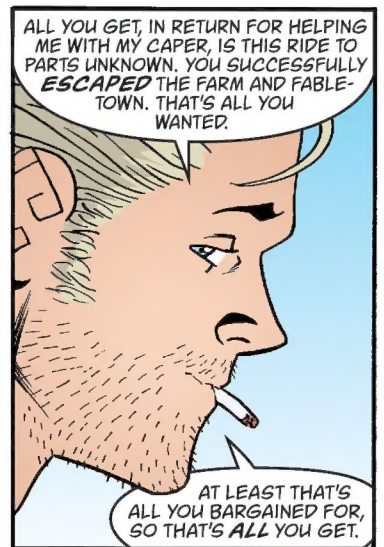


FACE IT, JILL. ANYWHERE WE GO IN THE WHOLE WIDE WORLD IS GOING TO BE AN EXOTIC NEW LAND FOR YOU.



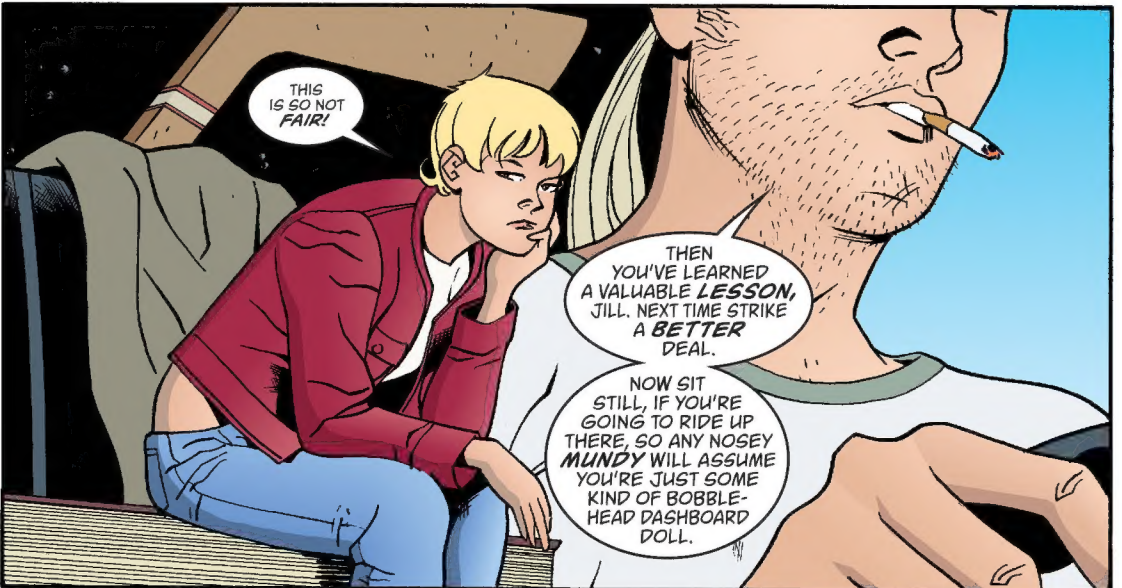
BUT I SHOULD *STILL* HAVE A SAY IN THE MATTER. AFTER ALL, YOU NEVER WOULD'VE GOTTEN ACCESS TO OUR FORTUNE IF I WASN'T ABLE TO STEAL THE KEY TO THE TREASURE ROOM.

FIRST OF ALL, KIDDO, IT ISN'T *OUR* FORTUNE, IT'S *MINE*.



ALL YOU GET, IN RETURN FOR HELPING ME WITH MY CAPER, IS THIS RIDE TO PARTS UNKNOWN. YOU SUCCESSFULLY *ESCAPED* THE FARM AND FABLETOWN. THAT'S ALL YOU WANTED.

AT LEAST THAT'S ALL YOU BARGAINED FOR, SO THAT'S ALL YOU GET.



THIS IS SO NOT FAIR!

THEN YOU'VE LEARNED A VALUABLE *LESSON*, JILL. NEXT TIME STRIKE A *BETTER* DEAL.

NOW SIT STILL, IF YOU'RE GOING TO RIDE UP THERE, SO ANY NOSEY *MUNDY* WILL ASSUME YOU'RE JUST SOME KIND OF BOBBLE-HEAD DASHBOARD DOLL.



DAYS
PASS.

WAKE UP,
JILL. WE'RE IN
HOLLYWOOD.

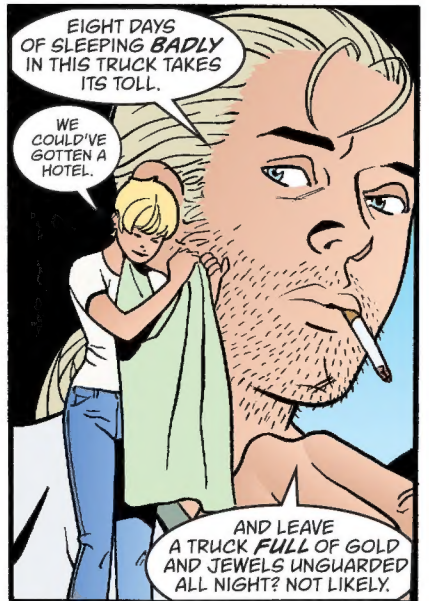
WE
MADE
IT.



ABOUT
TIME.

YOU
LOOK LIKE
DEATH
WARMED
OVER.

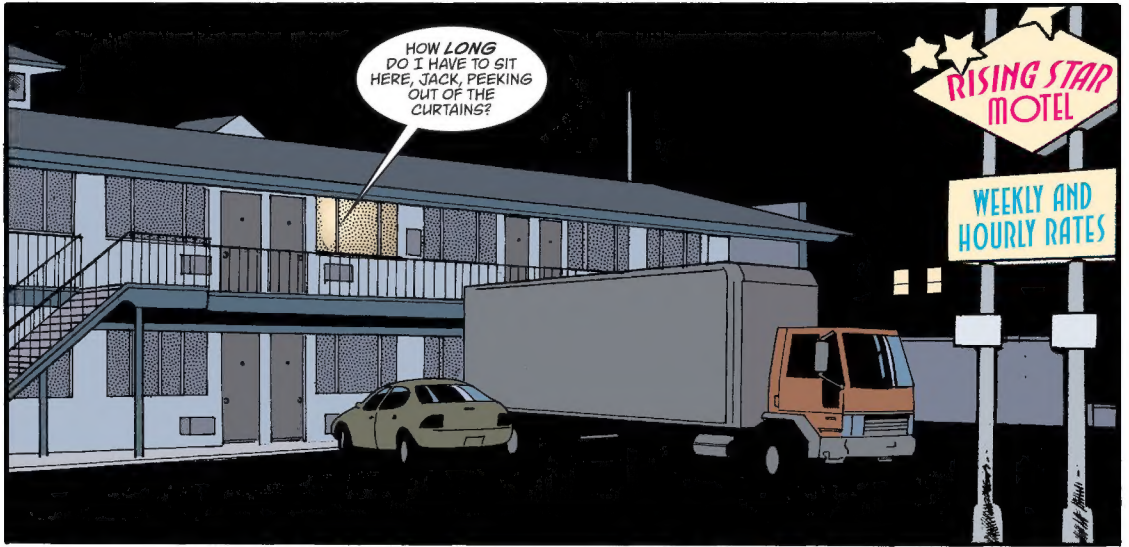
I FEEL
LIKE IT,
TOO.



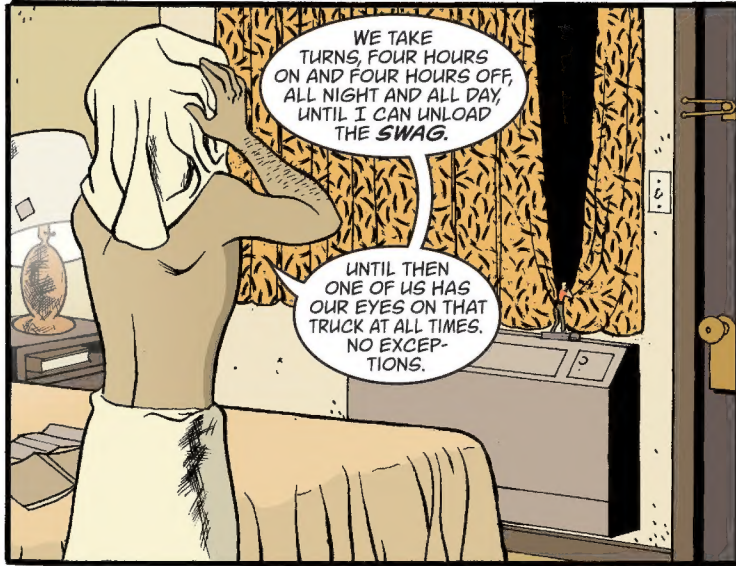
EIGHT DAYS
OF SLEEPING
BADLY
IN THIS TRUCK TAKES
ITS TOLL.

WE
COULD'VE
GOTTEN A
HOTEL.

AND LEAVE
A TRUCK FULL OF GOLD
AND JEWELS UNGUARDED
ALL NIGHT? NOT LIKELY.

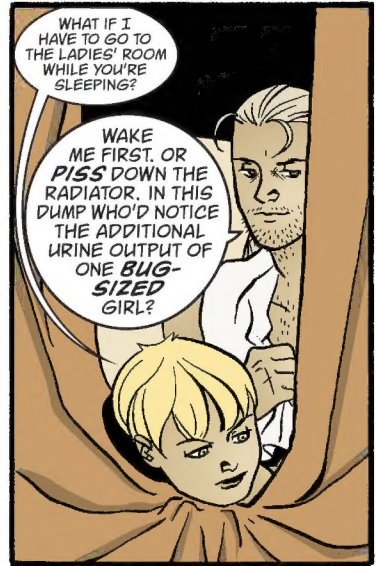


HOW LONG DO I HAVE TO SIT HERE, JACK, PEEKING OUT OF THE CURTAINS?



WE TAKE TURNS, FOUR HOURS ON AND FOUR HOURS OFF, ALL NIGHT AND ALL DAY, UNTIL I CAN UNLOAD THE SWAG.

UNTIL THEN ONE OF US HAS OUR EYES ON THAT TRUCK AT ALL TIMES. NO EXCEPTIONS.



WHAT IF I HAVE TO GO TO THE LADIES' ROOM WHILE YOU'RE SLEEPING?

WAKE ME FIRST, OR PISS DOWN THE RADIATOR. IN THIS DUMP WHO'D NOTICE THE ADDITIONAL URINE OUTPUT OF ONE BUG-SIZED GIRL?



PIG.

OINK, OINK.

WE DON'T HAVE ALL THAT LONG TO WAIT. I HAVE SOME PEOPLE COMING BY TOMORROW.



IF THINGS WORK OUT, WE'LL HAVE THIS STUFF IN A SAFE PLACE, AND ON ITS WAY TO BEING CONVERTED INTO USABLE CAPITAL, BY THE END OF THE WEEK.

WHO'S WE, JACKASS? I DON'T HAVE A STAKE IN THIS, REMEMBER?

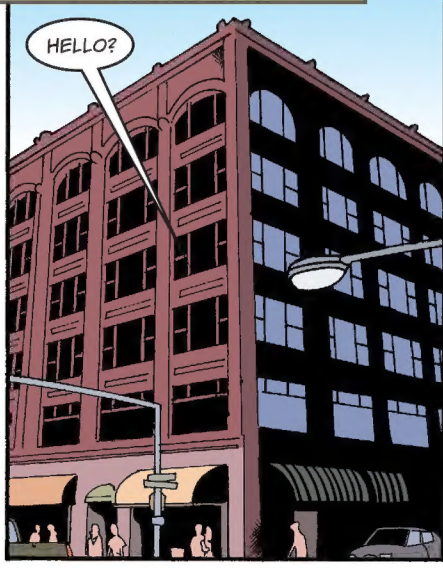
POOR BABY.

CHAPTER TWO:

THE TESTIMONY OF BERNARD STEIN

So you want to know what I know about the mysterious Mr. Trick, huh?

Well, sure., Why not? I guess I know as much about him as *anyone* in this miserable town.



HELLO?



ANYONE HOME?

BERNARD R. STEIN
CPA AND ATTORNEY AT LAW
FINANCIAL PLANNING
THEATRICAL REPRESENTATION
BY APPOINTMENT ONLY

Walk-ins Welcome

The first time I met him, he swaggered into my office like "Who wins the gold medal for best-looking man in the room and why aren't you jumping out of your seat to pin it on me?"



YOU BERNARD STEIN?

IF YOU'RE A **NEW CLIENT**, YOU CAN CALL ME BERNIE.

WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU, MISTER...?



CALL ME MR. TRICK.

THAT SOUNDS MADE UP.

IT IS, DOES IT MATTER?



IN THIS TOWN? NOT LIKELY.

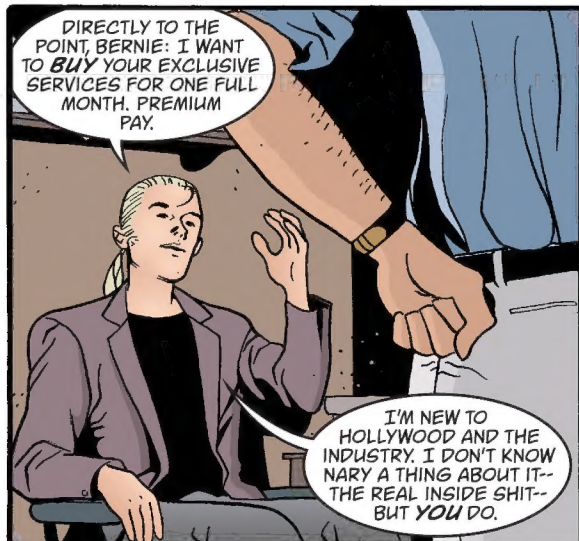
I GUESS YOU'D KNOW, YOU'VE BEEN HERE FOR FORTY YEARS, RIGHT? JUST ONE MORE OF THE MANY PILOT FISHES, LIVING OFF THE MINUSCULE SCRAPS SHED BY THE BIG SHARKS?



I WOULDN'T CHARACTERIZE MY CAREER AS--

HOW'D YOU LIKE TO MAKE SOME REAL MONEY FOR ONCE, BERNIE?

HAVE A SEAT, SIR.



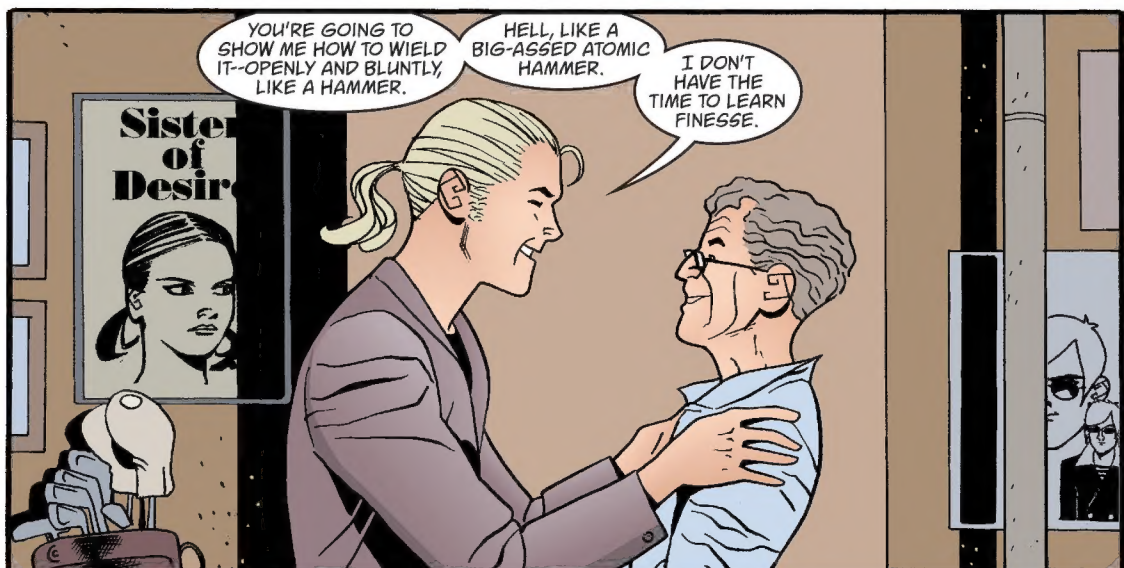
DIRECTLY TO THE POINT, BERNIE: I WANT TO BUY YOUR EXCLUSIVE SERVICES FOR ONE FULL MONTH, PREMIUM PAY.

I'M NEW TO HOLLYWOOD AND THE INDUSTRY. I DON'T KNOW NARY A THING ABOUT IT-- THE REAL INSIDE SHIT-- BUT YOU DO.



SO YOU'RE GOING TO TEACH ME. WHO THE REAL PLAYERS ARE AND WHO'S JUST BLOWING PRETTY SMOKE.

MONEY IS POWER HERE. I KNOW THAT MUCH. AND I HAVE MORE MONEY THAN GOD, SO THAT MEANS I HAVE POWER, RIGHT?



YOU'RE GOING TO SHOW ME HOW TO WIELD IT-- OPENLY AND BLUNTLY, LIKE A HAMMER.

HELL, LIKE A BIG-ASSED ATOMIC HAMMER.

I DON'T HAVE THE TIME TO LEARN FINESSE.

Maybe, in hindsight, I should've tossed him out on his keister on that first day. But I've been waiting so long for my ship to come in, I didn't see that when it finally arrived, it was a *pirate* ship, piloted by a first-rate cutthroat asshole.

Was that too much metaphor?

IT USED TO BE THE HOME OF GOLDEN PICTURES. NOW IT'S MOSTLY A TRASH HEAP.

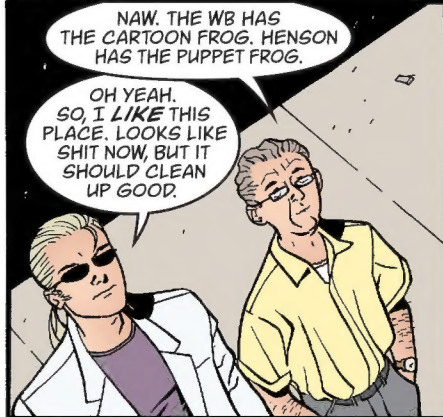
GOOD LOCATION, THOUGH. JUST AROUND THE CORNER FROM JIM HENSON STUDIOS.

THE ONE WITH THE FAMOUS CARTOON FROG?



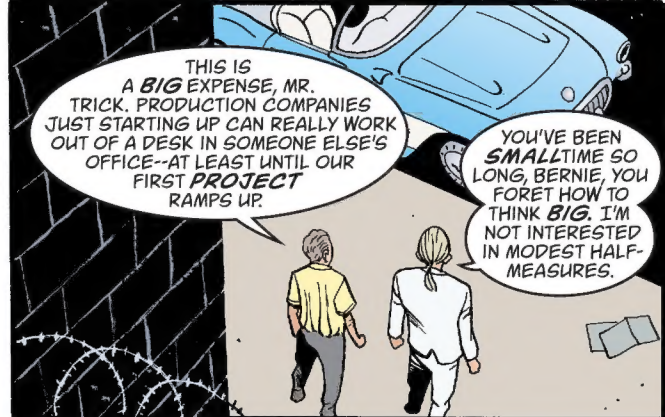
NAW. THE WB HAS THE CARTOON FROG. HENSON HAS THE PUPPET FROG.

OH YEAH. SO, I LIKE THIS PLACE. LOOKS LIKE SHIT NOW, BUT IT SHOULD CLEAN UP GOOD.



THIS IS A **BIG** EXPENSE, MR. TRICK. PRODUCTION COMPANIES JUST STARTING UP CAN REALLY WORK OUT OF A DESK IN SOMEONE ELSE'S OFFICE--AT LEAST UNTIL OUR FIRST **PROJECT** RAMPS UP.

YOU'VE BEEN **SMALLTIME** SO LONG, BERNIE, YOU FORGET HOW TO THINK **BIG**. I'M NOT INTERESTED IN **MODEST** HALF-MEASURES.

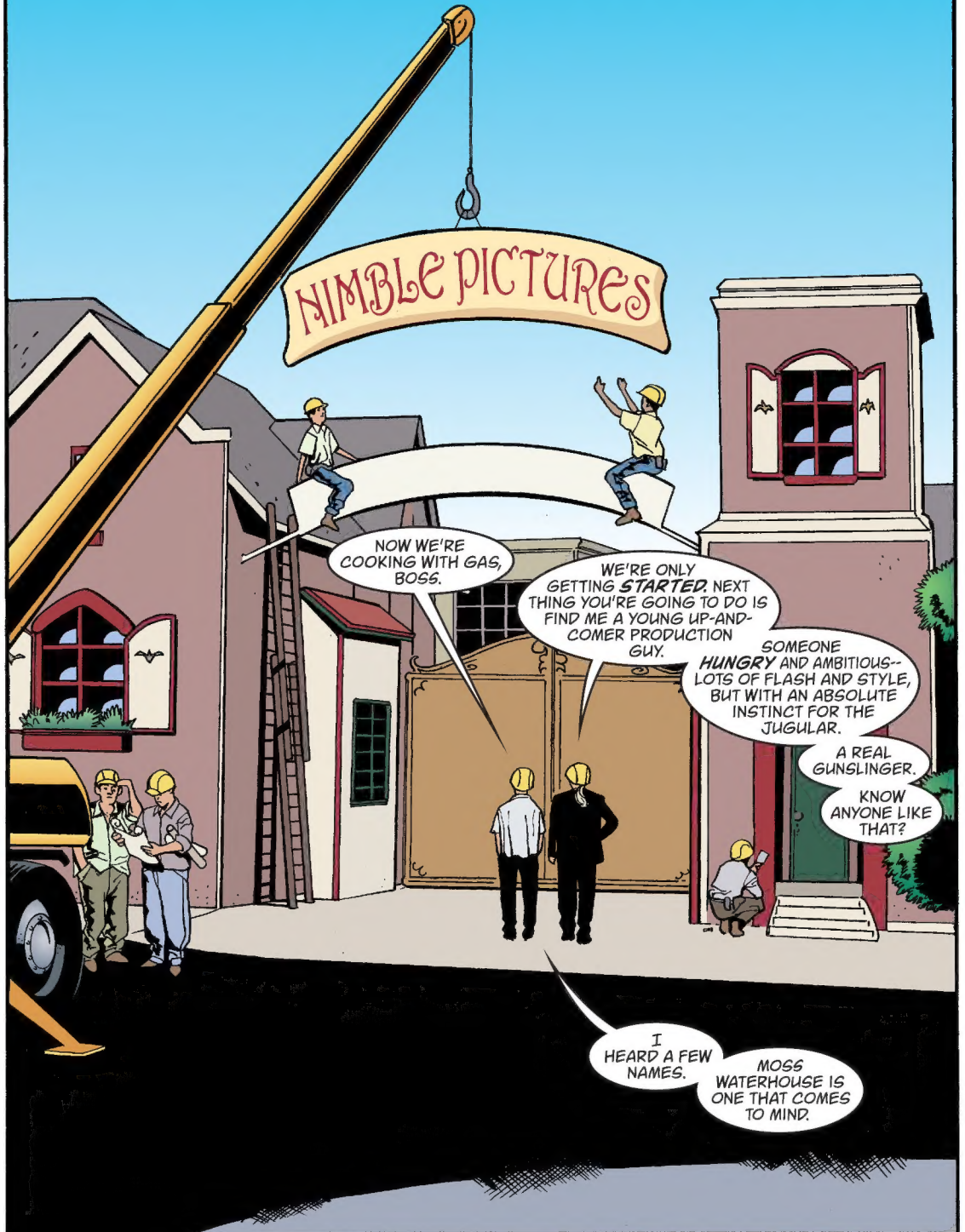


BUY IT. BUT CUT A GOOD DEAL. WE'LL SPEND WHAT WE NEED TO, BUT NOT A DIME MORE. GOT IT?

GOT IT, BOSS.



Still, I got to spend a lot of someone else's money. There are worse things to have to do, to scrape by.



NOW WE'RE COOKING WITH GAS, BOSS.

WE'RE ONLY GETTING *STARTED*. NEXT THING YOU'RE GOING TO DO IS FIND ME A YOUNG UP-AND-COMER PRODUCTION GUY.

SOMEONE HUNGRY AND AMBITIOUS-- LOTS OF FLASH AND STYLE, BUT WITH AN ABSOLUTE INSTINCT FOR THE JUGULAR.

A REAL GUNSLINGER.

KNOW ANYONE LIKE THAT?

I HEARD A FEW NAMES.

MOSS WATERHOUSE IS ONE THAT COMES TO MIND.

CHAPTER THREE:

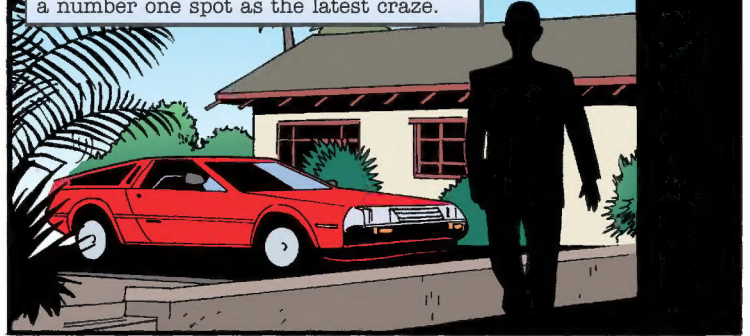
THE TESTIMONY OF MOSS WATERHOUSE

I was hearing the Mr. Trick name quite a lot, by the time my agent fixed up a meet-and-greet between us.

MOSS WATERHOUSE TO SEE MR. TRICK. I HAVE AN APPOINTMENT.

GO RIGHT IN, SIR. MAIN BUILDING. PARK IN ANY UNLABELED SLOT.

Seems he was an intriguing new mystery man, working behind the scenes. The fact that he wanted to keep a low profile in our high-profile-obsessed business ensured him a number one spot as the latest craze.



GO RIGHT IN, SIR. MR. TRICK IS EXPECTING YOU.



Trick turned out to be a young guy. My age. No surprise there, because this is a youth-biased industry. But I swear to God he had the OLDEST eyes I've ever seen.

MOSS!

GREAT TO FINALLY MEET YOU. I'VE HEARD SO MANY GOOD THINGS.

MIND IF WE SKIP THE USUAL CRAP AND GET RIGHT INTO THE THICK OF IT?



I'm SERIOUS. It was like looking at a THOUSAND-year-old man in a young guy's body.



I WANT YOU HERE, TO RUN OUR SHOP. BE THE PUBLIC FACE OF NIMBLE PICTURES.

THE JOB'S YOURS, IF YOU CAN CONVINCE ME YOU'RE THE MAN FOR IT.

Completely unimpressed eyes. Like there wasn't ANYTHING he hadn't already seen a million times before.



SO WOW ME ALREADY. WHAT CAN YOU BRING TO THE TABLE?

I'M A GAY, JEWISH, BLACK LIBERAL. I BELONG TO ALL THE RIGHT GROUPS AND SUPPORT ALL OF THE CURRENT TRENDY CAUSES.

I could tell he knew exactly how much of my spiel was bullshit.



FROM THE HIGHEST STUDIO TAI PANGS TO THE LOWLIEST JUNIOR ASSISTANT AGENTS, THERE'S NOT A WARM BODY IN TOWN THAT CAN RISK NOT TAKING MY CALL.

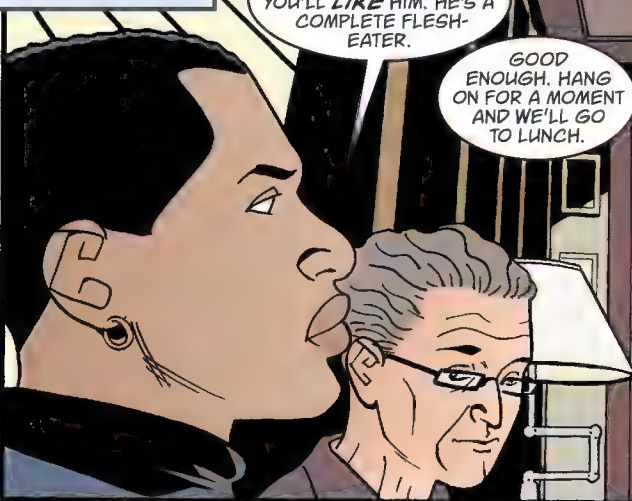
But I don't think he cared.



WANT TO TEST ME? NAME ANYONE AND I'LL HAVE HIM ON THE PHONE IN THE NEXT MINUTE.

NOT NECESSARY. YOU'RE HIRED. WANT TO HAGGLE OVER SALARY AND BONUSES NOW?

I'm embarrassed to admit I LIKED him right away.



NO, MY AGENT WILL HANDLE THAT PART. YOU'LL LIKE HIM. HE'S A COMPLETE FLESH-EATER.

GOOD ENOUGH. HANG ON FOR A MOMENT AND WE'LL GO TO LUNCH.





Mr. Trick knew how to play his role perfectly. For example, each Hollywood big shot has to have at least one unique personal idiosyncrasy--some odd thing that sets him well apart from everyone else.

DELIVERY FOR NIMBLE PICTURES.

TAKE IT RIGHT BACK TO THE MAIN OFFICE, GENTLEMEN.

Mr. Trick collected antique doll houses. No, I'm NOT kidding.

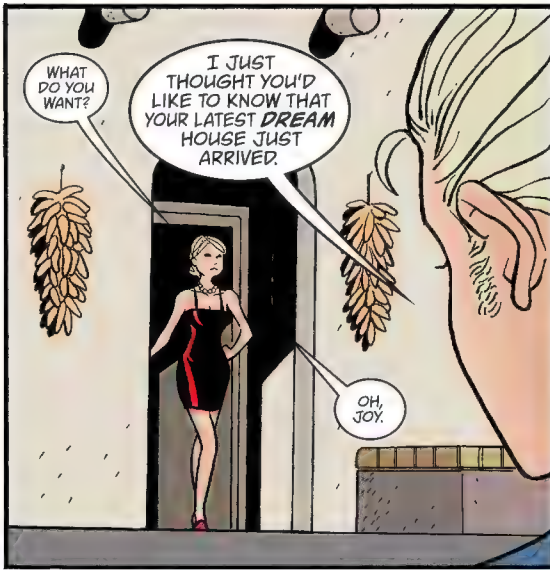
JUST SET IT DOWN ANYWHERE, BOYS. I'LL SET IT UP LATER.

His office is full of them. Wild, huh? I don't get a gay vibe from him, but who knows?

JILL?

OH, JILL?

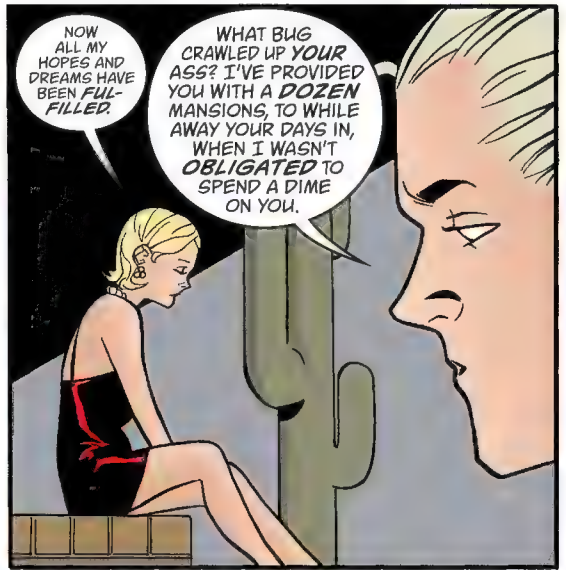
COME OUT, COME OUT, WHEREVER YOU ARE.



WHAT DO YOU WANT?

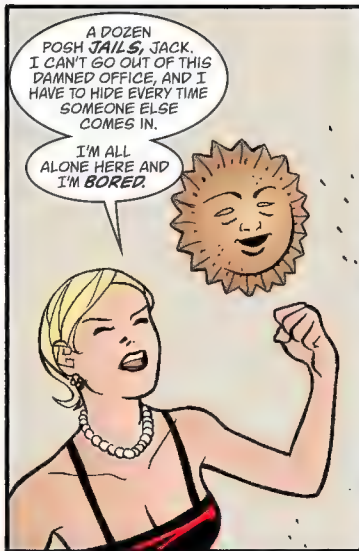
I JUST THOUGHT YOU'D LIKE TO KNOW THAT YOUR LATEST *DREAM* HOUSE JUST ARRIVED.

OH, JOY.



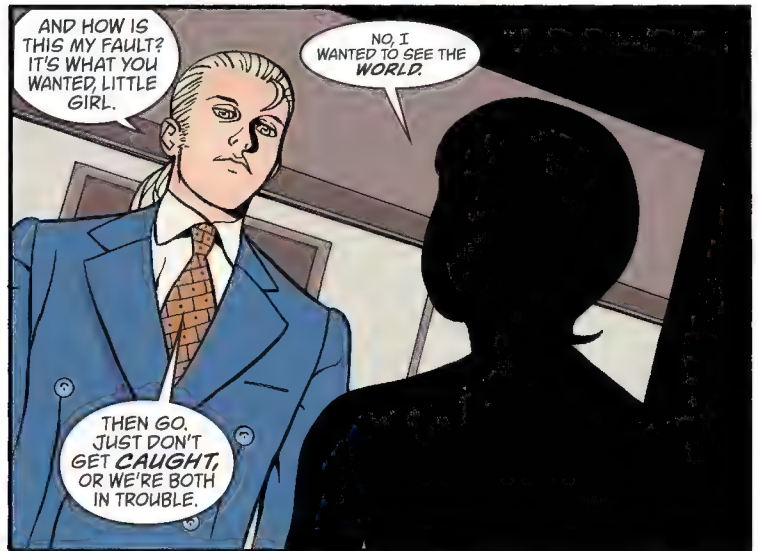
NOW ALL MY HOPES AND DREAMS HAVE BEEN *FUL-FILLED*.

WHAT BUG CRAWLED UP YOUR ASS? I'VE PROVIDED YOU WITH A *DOZEN* MANSIONS, TO WHILE AWAY YOUR DAYS IN, WHEN I WASN'T *OBLIGATED* TO SPEND A DIME ON YOU.



A *DOZEN* POSH *JAILS*, JACK. I CAN'T GO OUT OF THIS DAMNED OFFICE, AND I HAVE TO HIDE EVERY TIME SOMEONE ELSE COMES IN.

I'M ALL ALONE HERE AND I'M *BORED*.



AND HOW IS THIS MY FAULT? IT'S WHAT YOU WANTED, LITTLE GIRL.

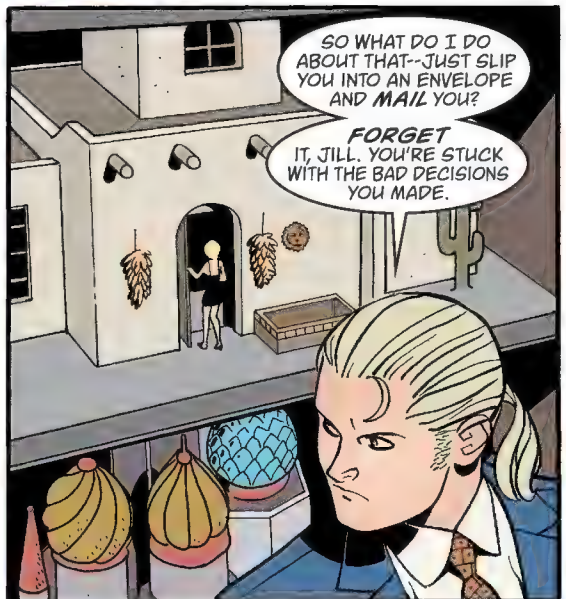
NO, I WANTED TO SEE THE *WORLD*.

THEN GO. JUST DON'T GET *CAUGHT*, OR WE'RE BOTH IN TROUBLE.



HOW CAN I GO *ANYWHERE?* ON FOOT? I'D BE SOME MUNDY RAT'S DINNER BEFORE I GOT A BLOCK AWAY. AND I CAN'T HITCH A RIDE ON A MUNDY BIRD. THEY DON'T *TALK!*

I MISS THE FARM. I WANT TO GO *HOME*.

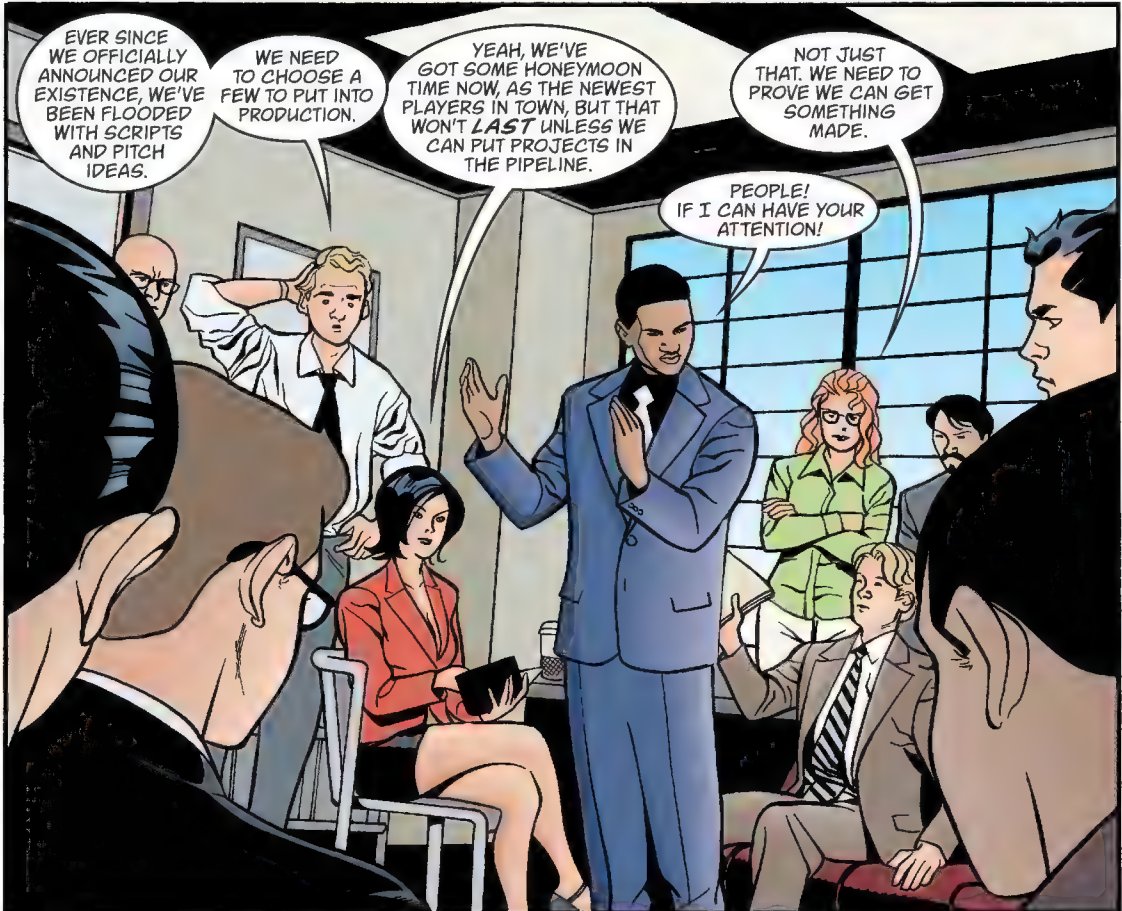
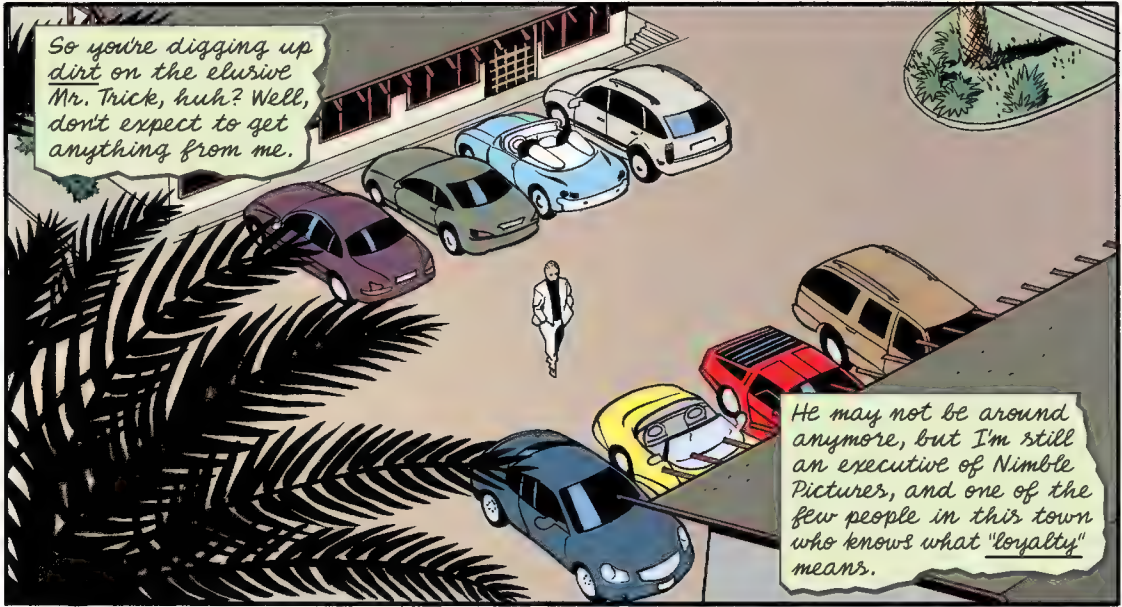


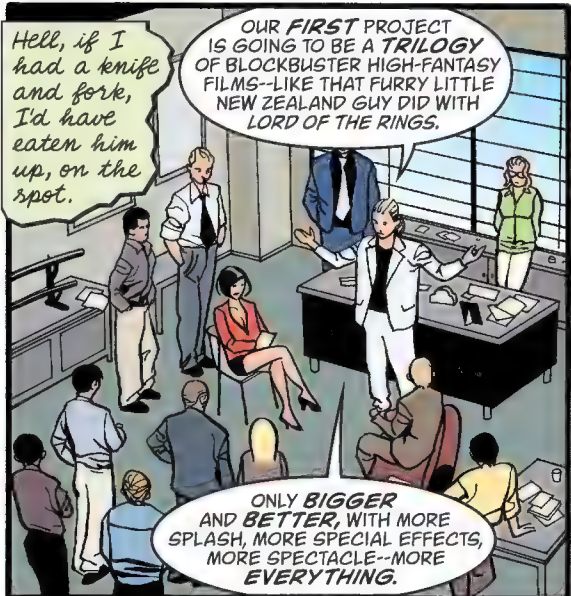
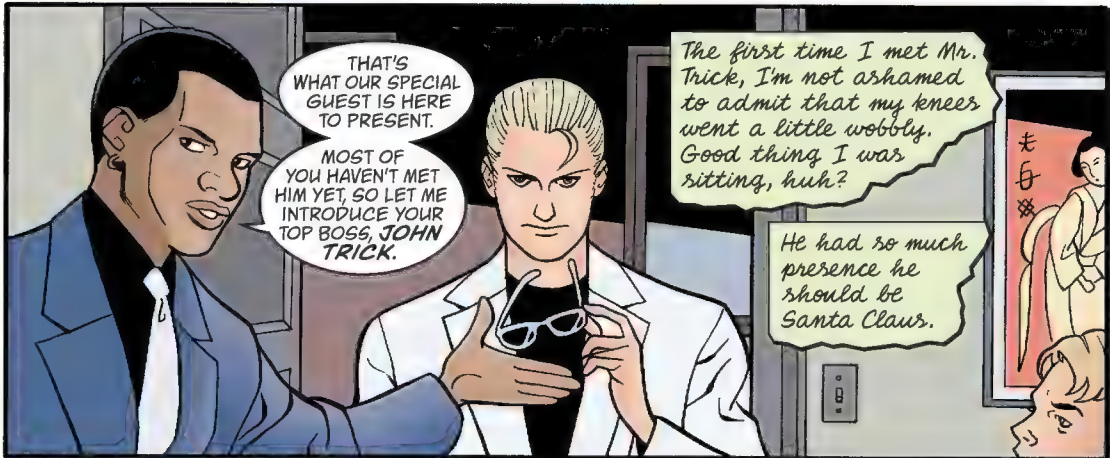
SO WHAT DO I DO ABOUT THAT--JUST SLIP YOU INTO AN ENVELOPE AND *MAIL* YOU?

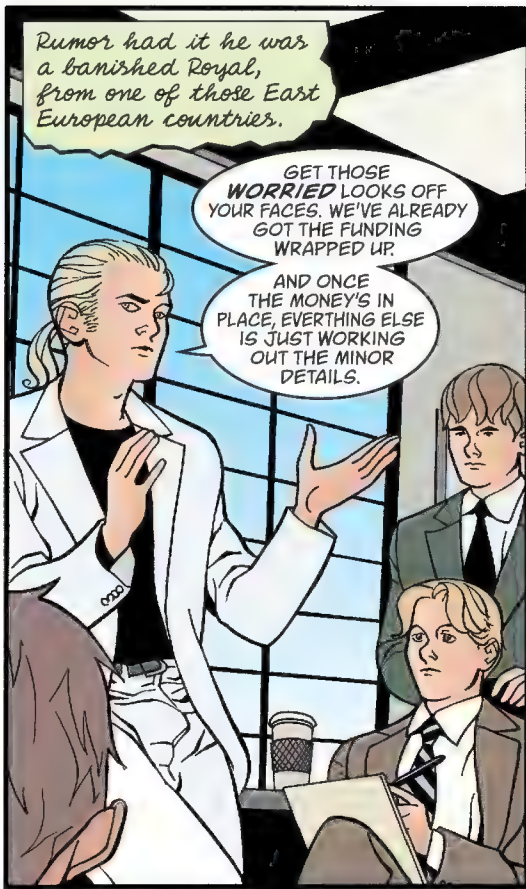
FORGET IT, JILL. YOU'RE STUCK WITH THE BAD DECISIONS YOU MADE.

CHAPTER FOUR:

THE TESTIMONY OF CHARLENE SPECK



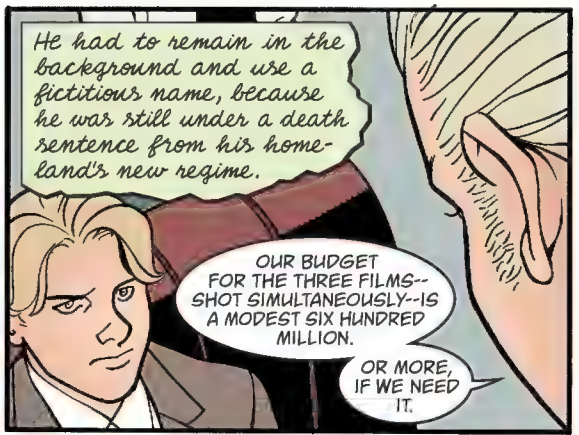




Rumor had it he was a banished Royal, from one of those East European countries.

GET THOSE **WORRIED** LOOKS OFF YOUR FACES. WE'VE ALREADY GOT THE FUNDING WRAPPED UP.

AND ONCE THE MONEY'S IN PLACE, EVERYTHING ELSE IS JUST WORKING OUT THE MINOR DETAILS.



He had to remain in the background and use a fictitious name, because he was still under a death sentence from his homeland's new regime.

OUR BUDGET FOR THE THREE FILMS--SHOT SIMULTANEOUSLY--IS A MODEST SIX HUNDRED MILLION.

OR MORE, IF WE NEED IT.

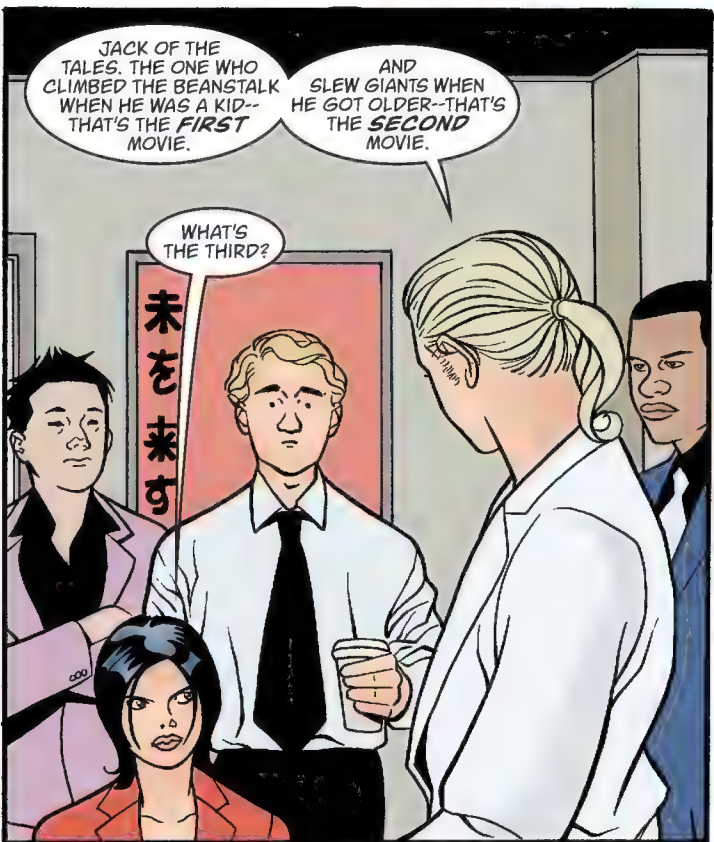


WOW.

NOW, AS TO THE SUBJECT--WE'RE GOING TO DO THE LIFE STORY OF JACK.

No bullshit. That's what I heard.

JACK WHO?



JACK OF THE TALES. THE ONE WHO CLIMBED THE BEANSTALK WHEN HE WAS A KID-- THAT'S THE **FIRST** MOVIE.

AND SLEW GIANTS WHEN HE GOT OLDER-- THAT'S THE **SECOND** MOVIE.

WHAT'S THE **THIRD**?



HE COMES TO AMERICA, **BEATS** THE DEVIL IN A POKER GAME, **SEDUCES** SNOW WHITE, CINDERELLA, RAPUNZEL, AND SLEEPING BEAUTY, AND EVENTUALLY **KILLS** THE BIG BAD WOLF IN SINGLE COMBAT.



We didn't waste time. This was the most efficient production I've ever worked on.

WE'LL USE THAT ONE, THAT ONE AND THAT. **SCRAP** THOSE TWO, AND REDO THAT ONE.

AND WHERE'S THE **BEANSTALK** DESIGN? THE ART DEPARTMENT PROMISED ME THAT BY THIS MORNING.

It was the only production I've ever worked on where there was only one person you had to go to, to get plans approved.

MR. TRICK WANTS BRAD PITT TO PLAY JACK-OR SOMEONE AS BIG AS HIM.

THERE'S **NO ONE** AS BIG AS BRAD PITT.

THEN YOU **BETTER** GET HIM THEN, HADN'T YOU?

Okay, sure, you had to go through Moss's first—after that day, no one got to talk directly to Mr. Trick—but Moss was entirely Trick's man, and he got answers immediately.

HERE'S THE NEW, APPROVED PAGES, GÜNTER. HOW MUCH **LONGER** UNTIL WE CLOSE HERE? WE'RE SCHEDULED TO START BUILDING THE CLOUD KINGDOM SETS ON THIS SOUND STAGE.

WE'RE RUNNING BEHIND.

Scene 24 Revision 4
EYES ONLY, DO NOT COPY!!!

John Trick had this unshakable focus of vision. Once he set his goals, he never second-guessed himself. Know anyone else in Hollywood like that?

THIS FOREST ISN'T BIG ENOUGH.

IT'S AS BIG AS TREES GET, MR. MOSS.

THEN WE'LL JUST HAVE TO BUILD ONE. CALL THE HELICOPTER, BILLY. WE'RE HEADING BACK TO L.A.

Me neither.

NO, GILDA DEAR, MR. TRICK **DOESN'T** DO PUBLICITY—NOT EVEN FOR HOLLYWOOD TONIGHT.

YOU CAN HAVE **ME**, OR THE DIRECTOR, OR SOME OF THE A-LIST STARS. THAT'S IT.

SORRY, BUT NO, YOU CAN'T VISIT. IT'S A CLOSED SET.

CHAPTER FIVE.

OTHER TESTIMONIALS

JOHN TRICK WAS THE **BIGGEST** ASSHOLE I EVER MET.

I HAD TO REWRITE MY SCREEN-PLAY **SEVEN** TIMES FOR HIM, AND HE STILL PISSED ALL OVER IT, UNTIL IT SMELLED LIKE HIM.

HE HAD TO CONTROL **EVERY** ASPECT OF THE STORY. NO ONE ELSE COULD CONTRIBUTE IDEAS, EVEN THOUGH HIS SENSE OF STORY STRUCTURE COULD BEST BE DESCRIBED AS AMATEURISH AND INSIPID.

HE WOULD EVEN MESSENGER ME PAGES OF DIALOGUE HE WROTE **HIMSELF**.

HANDWRITTEN CRAP. MISPELLED, COMPLETELY ALIEN SYNTAX, GRAMMAR AND ABSOLUTELY BIZARRE PUNCTUATION.

COMMAS EVERYWHERE, AS IF HE WERE UNDER THE THUMB OF SOME KIND OF COMMA UNION THAT **DEMANDED** A RIDICULOUS AMOUNT OF OVEREMPLOYMENT FOR ITS WORKERS.

DID HE EVEN **GO** TO SCHOOL? HE WAS AN IMBECILE, AND I TOLD HIM SO TO HIS FACE.

I DID SO! I ACTUALLY **MET** HIM MANY TIMES, AND IF YOU SAY OTHERWISE, **PROVE** IT, OR I'LL SUE YOU.

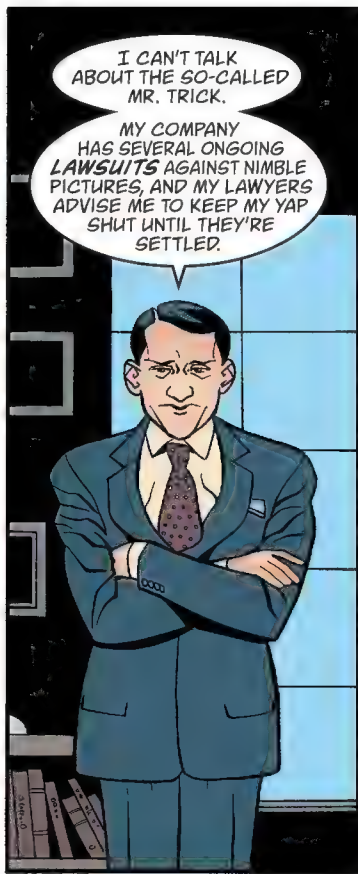
NO, I ONLY WORKED ON THE FIRST FILM. YEAH, I KNOW WHAT YOU HEARD, BUT HE DIDN'T FIRE ME--I WALKED.



JOHN TRICK WAS THE MOST GENEROUS, GIVING LOVER I'VE EVER HAD.

YES, WE WERE SECRETLY TOGETHER FOR SIX YEARS. IT WAS MY IDEA TO MOVE TO HOLLYWOOD.

YES, I STILL SEE HIM, BUT I WON'T SAY WHERE HE IS. AND DON'T TRY TO FOLLOW ME. WE ONLY WANT OUR PRIVACY.



I CAN'T TALK ABOUT THE SO-CALLED MR. TRICK.

MY COMPANY HAS SEVERAL ONGOING LAWSUITS AGAINST NIMBLE PICTURES, AND MY LAWYERS ADVISE ME TO KEEP MY YAP SHUT UNTIL THEY'RE SETTLED.



YES, IT'S HIS BABY. WHY DO YOU THINK HE FLED TOWN?



I HEARD HE WAS A FRONT MAN FOR THE MOB, AND THEY DIDN'T LIKE HIM GOING OVER BUDGET.

WE'LL NEVER SEE HIM AGAIN, BECAUSE HE'S BURIED WHEREVER THEY STASHED HOFFA.



HE DROPPED OUT OF SIGHT TO MAKE SURE HIS FILMS WERE NOT ONLY BIG HITS, BUT INSTANT CLASSICS--LIKE JAMES DEAN, AND RICHIE VALENS, RIGHT?

DIE YOUNG AND YOU'RE AN AUTOMATIC GENIUS.

HE'LL REAPPEAR AGAIN IN A FEW YEARS. MEANWHILE HE'S SOMEWHERE OVERSEAS, LAUGHING HIS ASS OFF AT WHAT A BIG DEAL WE'VE MADE OF HIM.



JOHN WHO?



WELCOME TO THIS **HOLLYWOOD** TONIGHT PRIME TIME SPECIAL!

THE BIG DAY HAS FINALLY ARRIVED! THE PREMIERE OF **JACK AND THE BEANSTALK**—THE FIRST OF THE **JACK** TRILOGY!

AND WITH US NOW IS THE HEAD OF NIMBLE PICTURES AND THE FILM'S **EXECUTIVE PRODUCER**, MOSS WATERHOUSE.

GOOD EVENING, MOSS. LET'S START WITH THE ONE QUESTION ALL OF OUR VIEWERS ARE SIMPLY **DYING** TO KNOW: WILL THE RECLUSIVE **MR. TRICK** BE MAKING AN APPEARANCE TONIGHT?

WHO KNOWS, GILDA? MAYBE HE'S HERE ALREADY. BUT TONIGHT ISN'T ABOUT **HIM**. IT'S ABOUT THE FIRST OF THE **JACK** FILMS.



INCOGNITO? YOU MEAN HE'S HERE **INCOGNITO**? OH, THAT'S **DELICIOUS**! MIKE, GERRY, GET ANOTHER CAMERA ON THE CROWDS TO SEE IF WE CAN PICK HIM OUT!

THE FILM, GILDA. WE'RE HERE TO TALK ABOUT THE **FILM**.



OH, IF YOU INSIST.

YOU'RE A PHENOM, JACK.



BUT AN ANONYMOUS ONE.

WHY'RE YOU LETTING YOUR FLUNKY GET ALL THE ATTENTION?

BECAUSE I'M SMARTER THAN THE AVERAGE BEAR.



IF NOTHING ELSE, OVER THE YEARS I'VE LEARNED WHICH FABLETOWN LAWS YOU CAN **BREAK**, AND WHICH LAWS YOU DARE **NOT** BREAK.

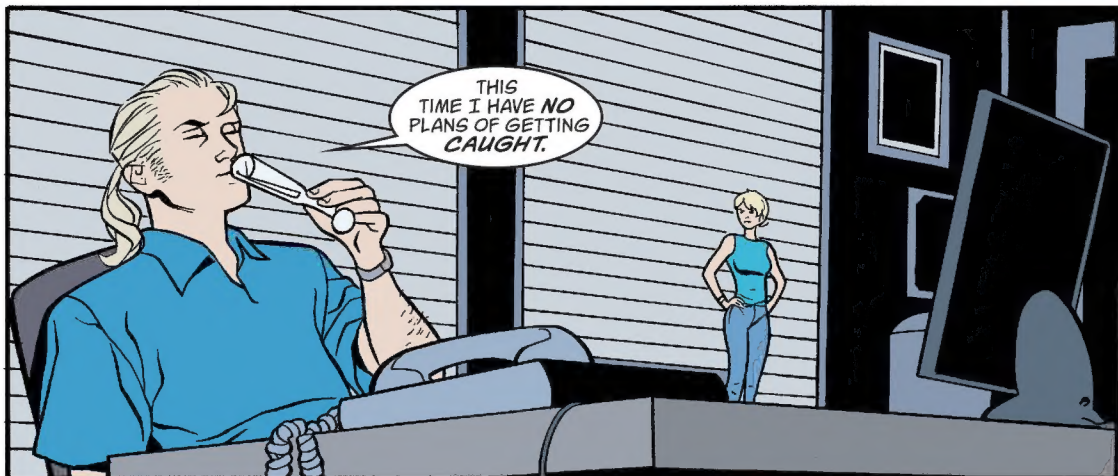


IF I'M CAUGHT FOR WHAT I'VE DONE SO FAR, I CAN LOOK FORWARD TO SOME YEARS AT THE FARM, MAKING SMALL ROCKS OUT OF **BIGGER** ROCKS.



BUT, IF I BREAK THE **PUBLIC ANONYMITY** LAWS, THEN IT'S THE **HEADMAN** FOR SURE.

OF COURSE IT'S ALL ACADEMIC.



THIS TIME I HAVE **NO** PLANS OF GETTING CAUGHT.

NEXT: WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON HERE.

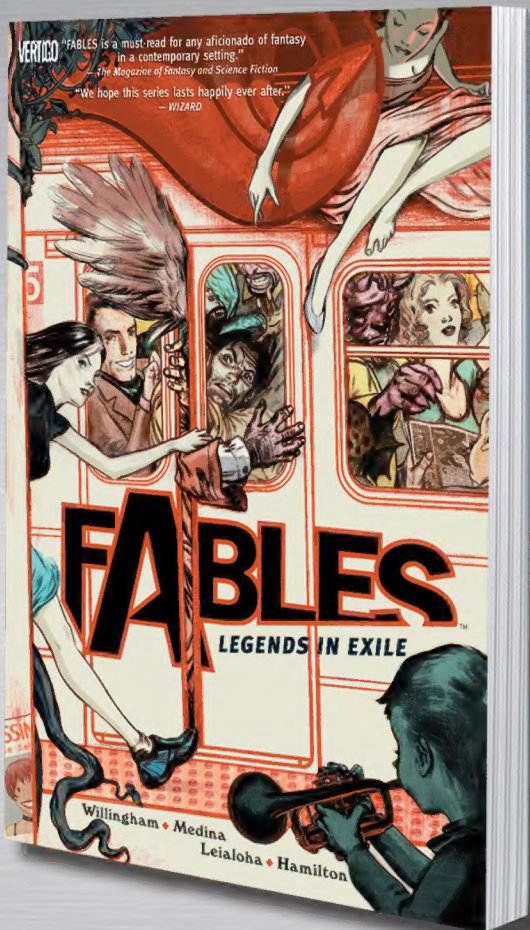
"FABLES is an excellent series in the tradition of SANDMAN, one that rewards careful attention and loyalty." – ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY

BILL WILLINGHAM

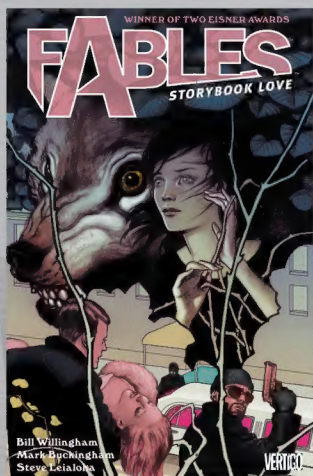
"[A] wonderfully twisted concept... features fairy tale characters banished to the noirish world of present-day New York."
– THE WASHINGTON POST



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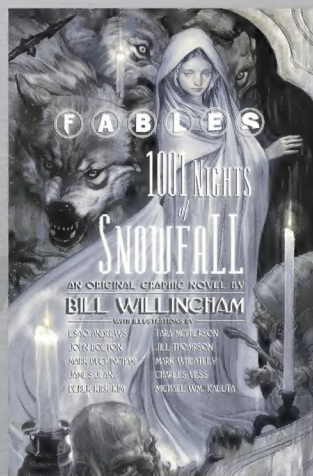
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NATHAN